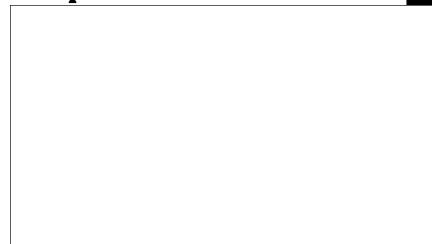
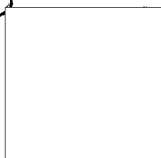




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⑨ ETHIOPIA: Mengistu's Strategy

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Ethiopian leader Mengistu's current effort to undermine Somali President Siad follows the inconclusive and politically embarrassing suspension of the campaign against Eritrean separatists last month. There is no evidence Mengistu's failure in Eritrea is directly threatening his rule, and he probably is attempting to strengthen his political position with a success against Somalia before US military aid can shore up Siad. When Ethiopian forces resume major operations in the north--possibly as early as this fall--they will face both the highly motivated Eritreans and a growing insurgency in adjacent Tigray Province.

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Mengistu reportedly had planned to initiate cross-border attacks into Somalia to aid anti-Siad guerrillas only after subduing the Eritrean rebels. Increased activity in the Ogaden by Somali Army regulars and Somali-supported guerrillas, however, may have persuaded Mengistu to try to oust Siad now. Mengistu also may believe that recent unrest, defections, and arrests in Somalia show Siad's grip weakening rapidly and that--with Ethiopian help--the 3,000 or more Libyan-aided guerrillas would be able to seize and hold ground in Somalia.

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Mengistu wants to install a regime in Mogadishu that will put aside irredentist goals and not allow the US to use its ports and airfields. At a minimum, he probably believes Siad's removal would compel Somali leaders to focus almost exclusively on a struggle for power.

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To achieve his aim, Mengistu is trying to establish the dissidents on Somali territory with the hope of fomenting mutinies, defections, and riots that would lead to Siad's downfall. He believes this can be accomplished without the movement of Ethiopian forces deep into Somalia. The Ethiopians have not shifted new units to the Ogaden or undertaken a major logistic buildup there.

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Although Mengistu recognizes his campaign against Somalia risks stronger US support for Siad, the Ethiopian leader apparently believes Siad will be toppled before

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US military aid can make a difference. Mengistu is trying to limit his risks by restricting the operation to shallow cross-border attacks and incursions, by emphasizing the role of the Somali dissidents, and by publicly disclaiming Ethiopian involvement in the operation. [redacted]

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Mengistu Still in Control

Mengistu thus far has been able to prevent the government's defeat in Eritrea from damaging his firm political control. Most Ethiopians realize the 20-year-old insurgency may never be completely subdued, and few wish to return to the chaotic and bloody power struggle of the mid-1970s that brought Mengistu to power. Moreover, despite his personal involvement in directing the campaign, Mengistu can deflect blame to his field commanders, Soviet advisers, the Sudanese, and to Eritrean officials in the Ethiopian Government, whom he reportedly is purging. [redacted]

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Problem of Sudanese Support

Before launching another major offensive in the north, Mengistu hopes to isolate the Eritrean rebels by inducing Sudan to end its support to them. The Sudanese, mindful of the attacks against Somalia, do not want to provoke Mengistu and probably are inclined at least to curtail aid to the Eritreans. The largest Eritrean group, however, is the least dependent upon sanctuary in Sudan. [redacted]

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Khartoum will not cut off the Eritreans completely unless Mengistu ends his cooperation in Libyan attempts to oust President Nimeiri. Mengistu is unlikely to do this, because continued Libyan aid is conditioned in large part upon Ethiopian participation in moves against Nimeiri. [redacted]

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Military Prospects in Eritrea

Ethiopian forces in Eritrea are conducting minor antiguerrilla sweep operations, repositioning troops, and filling their thinned-out ranks with police personnel and new recruits. Their task is complicated by the growing strength of Marxist rebels in Tigray Province, who

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have benefited from the government's preoccupation with Eritrea. Addis Ababa is aware of this problem and has / included Tigray in the economic reconstruction program intended to help pacify the north by undercutting the insurgents' appeal in urban areas. [redacted]

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Mengistu hopes to obtain economic aid from Western Europe for the reconstruction program. He is trying to / ease strained relations with several West European countries by playing on their erroneous belief that economic aid would help undercut Ethiopia's alliance with the USSR. [redacted]

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